

What's the News? Exploring the "War of the Worlds" Hoax in Text and Media

Genre: Drama

Standards

Primary

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.7 Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2a Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2b Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2c Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1b Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1c Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Secondary

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Lesson Overview

Lesson Summary

In this lesson, students practice critical information literacy skills through an examination of the “War of the Worlds” radio hoax. Students read excerpts from Mercury Theatre’s 1938 radio drama “The War of the Worlds,” directed by Orson Welles and based on the novel by H.G. Wells. Students listen to podcasts of parts of the script to explore why people create hoaxes and how they make them seem believable. They also watch two short videos about the public reaction to Mercury Theatre’s broadcast to consider what responsibility creators of media should have to their viewers to clarify what is and is not real in a work. Students consider the care that they must take in questioning news stories today—in an age in which we have many more tools with which to manipulate images and simulate events. As a culminating assignment, students work in groups to write and record their own radio news hoaxes.

Essential Questions

- What motivates people to create hoaxes?
- Do the creators of media have a responsibility to their viewers to clarify what is and is not real?
- When, why, and how should we question news stories?
- What techniques do writers use to make news stories convincing?
- How can I use transitions to strengthen my writing?

Sessions

- **Session 1:** A Hoax that Went Down in History
- **Session 2:** What Was Their Responsibility to Viewers?
- **Session 3:** Writing Project: Plan a Radio News Hoax
- **Session 4:** Writing Project: Write a Radio News Hoax
- **Session 5:** Writing Project: Present a Radio News Hoax

Session 1: A Hoax that Went Down in History

Session Summary

To begin the lesson, the teacher and students share urban legends and learn the difference between an urban legend and a hoax. Then students are introduced to a very famous hoax: Mercury Theatre’s radio broadcast of “The War of the Worlds” on October 30, 1938. Students watch a video about the broadcast and the effect it had on many listeners. Students read the first part of the radio play and write and discuss answers to guiding questions and the first Essential Question: What motivates people to create hoaxes?

CCSS Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1** Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

Essential Question

- What motivates people to create hoaxes?

Tasks

- **Activate Thinking: Urban Legends versus Hoaxes** Teacher introduces urban legends, has students share ones they have heard of, and then explains the difference between an urban legend and a hoax. (SL.8.1)
- **Media Analysis: Whole Group Viewing and Discussion** Students view and respond to a video about the October 30, 1938, radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* and the effect it had on listeners. (SL.8.2)
- **Text Analysis: Citing Evidence and Partner Discussion** Partners read the first excerpt from *The War of the Worlds* radio play. Partners use one color to highlight clues indicating that listeners were hearing a play and another color to highlight clues that made people believe that a catastrophic event was really taking place. Partners then join another pair and, using their highlights, discuss what the theater company did to make the hoax seem real and the clues provided that it wasn't. (RL.8.1, SL.8.1, SL.8.2)
- **Text and Media Analysis: Whole Group Discussion** Students discuss the first Essential Question: "What motivates people to create hoaxes?" (SL.8.1)

Teacher Preparation

- [Radio vs. Imagination](#) [00:00–1:40]
- [Guiding Questions for *The War of the Worlds*, Excerpt 1](#) (one copy per student)
- [Howard Koch: Excerpt 1 from Mercury Theatre's Radio Play *The War of the Worlds*](#) (one copy per student)
- Different colored markers

Instructional Procedure Chart

Section	Time	Instructional Sequence
Activate Thinking: Urban Legends versus Hoaxes	15 minutes	<p>Ask students if they have ever heard of an urban legend. Provide an example (such as pet alligators flushed down toilets and now living in the city's sewers) and then ask students to tell urban legends they have heard. Invite students to supply a definition for "urban legend." (Sample answer: <i>A story or information circulated as true that is actually not based on fact.</i>)</p> <p>Ask: Why do you think people circulate urban legends as if they were true? (Sample answers: <i>The stories sound as if they could be true; if a story is repeated often enough, people just figure it must be true.</i>)</p> <p>Explain that hoaxes are similar to urban legends, but hoaxes usually involve more planning and preparation; and that sometimes (though not always) they mean to intentionally mislead people. Tell students that many forms of media have pulled off hoaxes, including Twitter and respected news sources such as the British Broadcasting System (the BBC). Provide an example: On April Fool's Day in 1957,</p>

		<p>the BBC showed “farmers” in Switzerland harvesting strands of spaghetti from a farm of spaghetti trees. The BBC is highly respected around the world; a popular broadcaster delivered the “news” story, and spaghetti was not yet a well-known food in England. Thus, many viewers believed the report and called the BBC to ask how they could grow their own spaghetti trees!</p> <p>Begin a whole group discussion with these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors might have made people believe the spaghetti tree story? (<i>Respected source, popular newscaster, people didn’t know much about the topic</i>) • How might people today quickly debunk a hoax? (<i>Today, there are websites they can use to find out whether something is true or not.</i>) • Why didn’t people in England in 1957 quickly get out the truth about “spaghetti trees”? (<i>There was no Internet in 1957.</i>) <p>Explain that the focus of this lesson is hoaxes: who creates them, how they create them, why they create them, and when and why we should question what we see, hear, and read.</p>
Media Analysis: Whole Group Viewing and Discussion	5 minutes	<p>Ask students how a hoax played around Halloween might be similar to and different from an April Fool’s Day hoax. (Sample answer: <i>It would be meant to fool people, but would probably have a horror theme.</i>) Tell students that they are about to hear about a Halloween hoax from 1938 that was one of the most famous ever played on people. Before showing the video Radio vs. Imagination [00:00–1:40], ask students to consider why people might panic while listening to a radio broadcast. Then have students view the video.</p> <p>After viewing, ask students: What factors do you think might have contributed to some listeners’ panic? (Sample answers: <i>They probably thought the “news story” was real: it sounded like a real news bulletin was being aired because it cut right into a music program; sound effects made it seem real.</i>)</p>
Text Analysis: Citing Evidence and Partner Discussion	20 minutes	<p>Introduce the radio play by explaining that today and during the next session, partners will read an excerpt from the radio play that caused such a sensation. Explain that H.G. Wells was an early writer of science fiction and that the radio play they are about to read was based on his novel of the same name. Tell students that Orson Welles (no relation to H.G. Wells), who directed and performed in the play, was a young man who later became one of Hollywood’s most respected actors and directors.</p> <p>Distribute Guiding Questions for <i>The War of the Worlds</i>, Excerpt 1 and Howard Koch: Excerpt 1 from Mercury Theatre’s Radio Play <i>The War of the Worlds</i>. Tell students that this excerpt shows how the program began. You may want to explain that the video students just watched did not follow the script; it combined dialogue from different parts of the script to quickly give an impression of what the script was like.</p> <p>Before partners begin reading on their own, invite a volunteer to read the first words spoken by the Announcer and the first stage directions: (MUSIC: MERCURY THEATRE MUSICAL THEME). Then ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What clues did the Columbia Broadcasting System give to let listeners know that this “hoax” was not to be taken seriously? (Sample answers: <i>The announcer tells people that they are listening to a theatre presentation; people who knew the theme song of the theatre would know that they were about to hear a play.</i>) • What was the month and date on which the program was aired? (<i>October</i>

		<p>30)</p> <p>Encourage students to follow the directions on the Guiding Questions activity, and, as they read, to think about the first Essential Question: “What motivates people to create hoaxes?” (Note: You may wish to explain that until about the 1980s, the word “man” and the pronouns “he” and “his” were often used to refer to both men and women.)</p> <p>After reading, have each pair get together with another pair to form a group of four. Have students discuss the questions on the activity. Remind them to use their highlights to help them cite relevant evidence and details from the script and express their ideas clearly as they share ideas. Then call on pairs to share their ideas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did the writers and director do to make the Martian invasion seem real? (<i>They interrupted what sounded like a normal music program, mentioned observations by a professor at one observatory, and had another expert confirm them.</i>) • What clues might listeners have missed that would tell them that this was a play, not real observations of explosions on Mars? (Sample answers: <i>the announcer’s statement that this was broadcast by a theatre group; first-time listeners might not know the theme music</i>) • Do you think these clues were stated clearly enough for people who tuned in right at the beginning of the show? Explain your answer. (<i>Responses will vary.</i>) • Why might some people have thought the explosions on Mars were real? (Sample answer: <i>They might have been station surfing and missed the beginning.</i>)
Text and Media Analysis: Whole Group Discussion	4 minutes	<p>Reconvene the whole group and ask students to use their answers to the questions to consider the first Essential Question: “What motivates people to create hoaxes?” (Sample answers: <i>People create hoaxes to scare and thrill people; it probably makes the creators feel powerful when people fall for the hoax. In the case of the creators of the War of the Worlds radio play, they probably wanted to entertain and scare people on Halloween.</i>)</p>
Wrap Up	1 minute	<p>To wrap up, tell students that in the next session, they will read a second excerpt of <i>The War of the Worlds</i> radio play and listen to a podcast of a portion of the play as it was aired back in 1938 to try to dig further into the motives of the play’s creative team.</p>

- Bold text in the Instructional Sequence highlights explicit instruction to the Common Core standards.

Session 2: What Was Their Responsibility to Viewers?

Session Summary

Students read another excerpt from *The War of the Worlds* radio play and listen to a podcast that presents parts of the play as it was broadcast back in 1938. Using guiding questions, partners consider the motives behind the theatre’s presentation of the play and the responsibility of the broadcast’s creators to its audience. Students then view an interview with Orson Welles and role-play the interview to continue exploring the lesson’s second Essential Question: “Do the creators of media have a responsibility to their viewers to clarify what is and is not real?”

CCSS Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1** Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.7** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1** Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Essential Questions

- What motivates people to create hoaxes?
- Do the creators of media have a responsibility to their viewers to clarify what is and is not real?

Tasks

- **Text Analysis: Citing Evidence and Partner Discussion** Partners read a second excerpt from *The War of the Worlds* radio play as they listen to a podcast of that part of the script, and then discuss and answer guiding questions regarding the fidelity of the radio production to the script and the creators' motives as well as their responsibility to their audience. (RL.8.1, RL.8.7)
- **Media Analysis: View and Respond to a Video** Students watch a video in which Orson Welles talks to reporters about the broadcast, and then consider the sincerity of his remarks. (RI.8.1, SL.8.1, SL.8.2)
- **Media Analysis: Role Play** Students role-play the interview with Orson Welles and reporters, questioning Welles about his responsibility toward his listeners. They cite evidence from the play script and podcast in their questions. (RL.8.1, RI.8.1, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)

Teacher Preparation

- [Stuff You Missed in History Class Podcast: Orson Welles and *The War of the Worlds*](#) [17:50–19:09]
- [Guiding Questions for *The War of the Worlds*, Excerpt 2](#) (one copy per student)
- [Howard Koch: Excerpt 2 from Mercury Theatre's Radio Play *The War of the Worlds*](#) (one copy per student)
- [Radio Station's "Attack by Mars" Panics Thousands](#) [00:54]
- Straws

Instructional Procedure Chart

Section	Time	Instructional Sequence
Activate Thinking: Discuss Responsibilities of the Media	5 minutes	To activate thinking, tell students that today, media—especially films—often try to make viewers think a fictional experience is real. Ask: Should the creators of media have a responsibility to their viewers to clarify what is and is not real? <i>(Responses will vary, but students may say that the creators do not have this responsibility; in fact, viewers get more of a thrill from the media if they think it might be real, and today it is much easier to find out if something is a hoax.)</i> Ask students to keep this Essential Question in mind during the session as they read the next part of <i>The War of the Worlds</i> and hear Orson Welles' response to journalists' questions about the broadcast.
Text	20 Minutes	Distribute Guiding Questions for <i>The War of the Worlds</i>, Excerpt 2 activity and

<p>Analysis: Citing Evidence and Partner Discussion</p>		<p>Howard Koch: Excerpt 2 from Mercury Theatre's Radio Play <i>The War of the Worlds</i>.</p> <p>Provide a summary of what happened between the first excerpt and this one: After the part of the script we read in Session 1, listeners have been introduced to “Announcer Two”; the radio’s news commentator, Carl Phillips; and a New Jersey astronomer, Professor Pierson. Pierson has told Phillips he doesn’t believe intelligent life exists on Mars, but that he can’t explain the gas eruptions on the planet’s surface. Suddenly, Phillips interrupts the interview to read a message from a Dr. Gray of the National History Museum in New York. The message says that a strong shock has shaken the landscape near Princeton, New Jersey; Pierson says it was probably a large meteorite. Soon, Announcer Two breaks in with another message: A huge, flaming object has fallen on a farm near Grovers Mill, New Jersey. When the play picks up in Excerpt 2, Carl Phillips has arrived at Grovers Mill to investigate the strange object.</p> <p>Ask partners to follow the directions on the Guiding Questions activity and read their scripts for Excerpt 2 from the play up to Phillips’ line: <i>Would you mind standing to one side, please?</i> Then have them read along as you play Stuff You Missed in History Class Podcast: Orson Welles and <i>The War of the Worlds</i> [17:50–19:09]. Have partners discuss and answer the guiding question on the activity. Ask them to share their responses.</p> <p>Sample Answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent does the radio production of the drama stay faithful to the script? What choices did the director and actors make in creating the radio version? (Sample answers: <i>The radio production is quite faithful to the script, but the actors add pauses and sounds such as “ah” to make their lines of dialogue sound as convincing as possible. For example, the actor playing Mr. Wilmuth sounded as if he wasn’t used to speaking into a microphone when he cleared his throat. The interviewer sounded impatient with him and chuckled a bit as he listened. It seems as if the director wanted the actors to sound very natural.</i>) • Evaluate the motives behind the theatre’s presentation of the play. Was it meant to fool people? Is there any way to find out for sure? (<i>The play’s creators must have known that some people would think it was real. With the sound effects and the actors’ direction, the creators made every effort to make it sound as if the disaster were really happening. In this case, it was the night before Halloween, so we can infer that they might have wanted to scare people. However, we can’t know for sure, because they did provide clues that it was “just a play.”</i>) • Should the creators of the play have had more of a responsibility to their viewers to clarify what was and what was not real? (<i>The creators thought that they were clarifying this, but since many people panicked, it appears they didn’t succeed.</i>)
<p>Media Analysis: View and Respond to a Video</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>	<p>Tell students that shortly after the radio play was broadcast live, Orson Welles was interviewed by reporters about the wide-scale panic his broadcast caused. Before students listen to Radio Station’s “Attack by Mars” Panics Thousands [00:54], ask them to consider whether Welles was genuinely puzzled by the reaction people had to his broadcast, or if they think he was being insincere in his remarks. After they view the video, ask for the students’ thoughts. (Sample answer: <i>He did say that the story had been around for a long time in many different forms, so people shouldn’t have been fooled. He seemed genuine, but then, Welles was an actor. He could have been putting on an act.</i>)</p>
<p>Media Analysis:</p>	<p>12 minutes</p>	<p>Ask students to form small groups of four or five to role-play continuing the</p>

Role-Play		<p>interview with Orson Wells. Have them draw straws to determine which of them will play the role of Orson Welles. Ask the rest of the group to play the role of reporters at the filmed interview they saw. Suggest that the “reporters” cite evidence from the play script and audio podcast to press Welles about whether or not the show’s creators showed enough responsibility to their listeners. At the same time, encourage “Orson Welles” to speak in a calm, focused manner, using appropriate eye contact, volume, and pronunciation to appear as convincing as possible in his denials.</p> <p>After about ten minutes of the role-play, ask the groups if they were able to get Welles to admit that the play’s creators did not show enough responsibility to its listeners. Then ask: Why might this be hard to do? (Sample answer: <i>He could have been telling a half-truth in the original interview. The story had been around for a long time, as Welles said, and the station did identify it at the beginning of the broadcast, yet everything about the presentation was designed to make the events seem real.</i>)</p>
Wrap Up	3 minutes	<p>Wrap up the session by telling students that in the next session, they will start thinking about the third Essential Question: “When, why, and how should we question news stories?”</p> <p>As homework, ask students to listen to a radio or TV newscast, or visit a news website, taking notes on what they see or hear that makes the news delivery sound convincing. Have them come to the next session prepared to offer some ideas to answer this question.</p>

- Bold text in the Instructional Sequence highlights explicit instruction to the Common Core standards.

Session 3: Writing Project: Plan a Radio News Hoax

Session Summary

As a whole group, students discuss the third Essential Question: “When, why, and how should we question news stories?” Students continue the discussion by focusing on how people can distinguish a real news story from a hoax and an honest news story from one that is overly biased or incomplete. Then, in small groups, students begin planning a radio news hoax.

CCSS Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2b** Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

Essential Questions

- When, why, and how should we question news stories?
- What techniques do writers use to make news stories convincing?

Tasks

- **Activate Thinking: Discuss an Essential Question** Students discuss the techniques that can make a news story seem convincing and consider the Essential Question: “When, why, and how should we question news stories?” The discussion continues as students explore ways to distinguish between a real story and a hoax and a credible news story and an overly biased one. Finally, students discuss ways they can use what they have learned to create a convincing radio news hoax of their own. (W.8.9, SL.8.1, SL.8.2)
- **Writing Project: Plan a Radio News Hoax** In small groups, students brainstorm topics on which they consider themselves “experts” and use that as the basis for their radio news hoax. They then consider real facts and made-up details that they might include to support the “veracity” of their hoax. (W.8.2b, W.8.9)

Teacher Preparation

- [Radio News Hoax Writing Assignment](#) (one copy per student)
- [News Hoax Organizer](#) (one copy per student)

Instructional Procedure Chart

Section	Time	Instructional Sequence
Activate Thinking: Whole Group Discussion	15 minutes	<p>Ask students what news sources they listened to for homework. Call on students who listened to different sources (radio, TV, web) and ask what techniques they saw or heard that made the newscasts sound convincing. (Sample answers: <i>sound bites, including interviews; video footage and photographs; reputable station, website, and/or newscaster</i>) Then ask them to consider the Essential Question: “When, why, and how should we question news stories?” (Sample answers: <i>when something sounds too good to be true or impossible to believe; if it is April Fools’ Day or close to Halloween; when something makes you suspect the motives of the person delivering the story or of the people involved in it; when the story contains contradictions or points that you know to be errors</i>)</p> <p>Continue the discussion with these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of things can help you judge whether or not a news story is true? (Sample answers: <i>Consider the medium. For example, a respected national magazine is likely to be more credible than a blog. You can research the author’s and publisher’s credentials and think about whether the author has the background and authority to honestly present the news story. You can look for sources on which the story is based.</i>) • How can bias make a fact-based story not entirely true? (Sample answers: <i>Reporters and producers may have hand-picked only the sources or evidence that support their own viewpoint; they may not represent all sides of an issue.</i>) • What tools do we have today that can manipulate images? How important is it to consider manipulation when we see images on TV, in emails, or on the Internet? (Sample answers: <i>Students may name software that can manipulate videos and photographs. They may provide examples of manipulations they have seen with humorous or serious intent and say that almost any image can be manipulated, so it is important to question anything that seems unlikely or meant to convince people of a narrow viewpoint.</i>) • Do you think news reporting is as careful as it should be? What makes you think so? (Sample answers: <i>Students may point out that there are a lot of web-based news sources that rely on citizens for news, and those citizens may not have fact-checked their sources as rigorously as a news story from a respected news publication or medium. Students may know that many news bureaus have reduced the number of investigative reporters, so the reporters who are left don’t have time to do the thorough research</i>

		<p><i>they could do in the past to fully cover a story.)</i></p> <p>Introduce the writing project: to write and record a radio news hoax. Distribute Radio News Hoax Writing Assignment and review it with students. Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could you use real facts and other techniques to create a radio hoax that seems as believable as <i>The War of the Worlds</i> broadcast was? (Sample answer: <i>The hoax should sound true and contain some facts that everyone knows to be true and some made-up “facts.”</i>) • What techniques can we use to make a hoax convincing? How can you use the radio format to your advantage? (Sample answers: <i>sound effects, person-on-the-street interviews, interviews with experts, actors, technique of cutting into what seems like a regular radio show</i>)
<p>Writing Project: Plan a Radio News Hoax</p>	29 minutes	<p>Arrange students in small groups and distribute News Hoax Organizer. Ask each group to brainstorm topics on which one or more students consider themselves experts and then choose one as the basis for their radio news hoax. Remind them to choose a topic that they can support with both real facts and made-up “facts” and realistic details that will sound as if they support the hoax’s main idea.</p> <p>Provide examples, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martial arts: This news hoax reports on a study showing that kids who earn black belts are most likely to become CEOs. Studying the forms called <i>katas</i> (specific patterns of movements) strengthens critical-thinking skills, and obtaining the black belt makes participants feel powerful and confident. • Music: This news hoax reports on a new kind of music called M-Pop that actually changes listeners’ brain waves and helps them to do better on tests. <p>Explain that these examples form just the beginning of ideas for a radio news hoax, and groups should come up with their own ideas.</p> <p>Once the groups have selected a topic, have them work through the “5 W’s and H” and consider the facts and details—both real and made-up—that will make the news story sound convincing.</p>
Wrap-Up	1 minute	<p>Ask students to come to the next session prepared to share ideas about sound effects that will make the group’s news hoax sound convincing.</p>

- Bold text in the Instructional Sequence highlights explicit instruction to the Common Core standards.

Session 4: Writing Project: Write a Radio News Hoax

Session Summary

The teacher models how to use transition words to link ideas together. Each small group writes and then revises and proofreads their radio news hoax.

CCSS Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2a** Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2b** Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2c** Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 8 here.)
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Essential Questions

- What techniques do writers use to make news stories convincing?
- How can I use transitions to strengthen my writing?

Tasks

- **Writing Project: Using Transition Words** The teacher models turning facts into a well-written introduction to a radio news hoax through the use of transition words. (W.8.2c)
- **Writing Project: Write a Radio News Hoax** In groups, students work together to write their radio news story. (W.8.2a–c, SL.8.1)
- **Writing Project: Revise and Proofread a Radio News Hoax** Groups review their writing to see if they can improve it by adding more transition words. Then each group proofreads its news story, paying special attention to the conventions of Standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics. (W.8.4, W.8.5, L.8.1a–d, L.8.2a–c)

Teacher Preparation

- [News Hoax Organizer](#) (distributed in session 3)
- [Radio News Hoax Writing Assignment](#) (distributed in session 3)
- Rubric: Informative (Radio News Hoax) (one copy per student)

Instructional Procedure Chart

Section	Time	Instructional Sequence
Writing Project: Using Transition Words	5 minutes	<p>Have students recall the fake news story about M-Pop from Session 3, or another radio hoax you shared with students. Then model using transition words to work real facts into the introduction to a news hoax. Point out that well-chosen transition words can help them maintain the formal tone of a real news story. For example:</p> <p>Fact: In 1993, a study by Rauscher, Shaw, and Ky showed that test scores in spatial reasoning were temporarily higher after students listened to a sonata by the famous composer Mozart. The results were published in the prestigious science magazine <i>Nature</i>.</p> <p>Fact: Numerous studies have tried and failed to replicate the study.</p> <p>Use of transition words: People have long wanted to believe that listening to music improves your ability to think. <u>In 1993</u>, a study by Rauscher, Shaw, and Ky showed that test scores in spatial reasoning were temporarily higher after students listened to a sonata by Mozart. The study was published in the prestigious science magazine <i>Nature</i>. <u>However</u>, this theory has been difficult to prove <u>since</u> early</p>

		<p>studies using the music of Mozart have not been replicated. <u>Now, though</u>, researchers have shown that listening to a new kind of popular music actually improves students' test scores. Scientists have dubbed this new music "M-Pop."</p> <p>To check students' understanding, you may want to ask them to raise a hand when they hear a transition word or words and ask volunteers to explain the effects of the transition words.</p>
Writing Project: Write a Radio News Hoax	30 minutes	<p>Distribute Radio News Hoax Writing Assignment and Rubric: Informative (Radio News Hoax). Review the "4" column of the rubric and then have groups use these handouts, along with their News Hoax Organizer from Session 3, to draft their radio news hoaxes. Have groups select one student as scribe, while all contribute to the content. Remind students to answer the "5 W's and H" within the story and to plan their sound effects: What will they be? Who will create them, and how?</p> <p>Have groups decide whether they will have one "newscaster" present the hoax for the whole group or whether multiple students will be involved. If the latter, copy over or photocopy the script. If sound effects are to be included, ask them to assign that task to one or two group members.</p>
Writing Project: Revise and Proofread a Radio News Hoax	8 minutes	<p>After groups have finished writing the first draft of their radio news hoax, have one member read it aloud as others suggest revisions to add more transitions and correct grammar. Then select members to proofread the script for correct capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.</p>
Wrap Up	2 minutes	<p>Wrap up by reminding students that they will record their radio news hoax during Session 5. Encourage students who are presenting the news story to practice at home, and encourage students who have been assigned the task of providing sound effects to work out and practice the effects at home.</p>

- Bold text in the Instructional Sequence highlights explicit instruction to the Common Core standards.

Session 5: Presentation: Radio News Hoax

Session Summary

The teacher demonstrates good presentation skills, and then each group records their radio news hoax. After all groups have made their recordings, the teacher plays each one. Groups consider the support and techniques that made the hoaxes convincing or unconvincing, along with the group's presentation skills, and vote on the most convincing hoax.

CCSS Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as interact and collaborate with others.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4** Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Essential Question

- What techniques do writers use to make news stories convincing?

Tasks

- **Writing Project: Using Good Presentation Skills** After the teacher demonstrates good presentation skills, each group records their radio news hoax, using any sound effects and other techniques they have developed. (W.8.6, SL.8.4)
- **Writing Project: Present a Radio News Hoax** After each group has presented their radio news hoax, students consider the support, techniques, and presentation skills that made the hoaxes convincing or unconvincing and vote on the most convincing hoax. (SL.8.1)

Teacher Preparation

- Rubric: Informative (Radio News Hoax) (distributed in session 4)
- Audio recorders

Instructional Procedure chart

Section	Time	Instructional Sequence
Writing Project: Using Good Presentation Skills	5 minutes	Review the presentation part of the Rubric: Informative (Radio News Hoax). Then, use the transition words example from Session 4 to model good and bad presentation skills. In the bad model, read softly, quickly, and without expression. In the good one, model and reinforce appropriate volume, pacing, and pronunciation.
Writing Project: Present a Radio News Hoax	35 minutes	Have each group record its radio news hoax; then play each one for the whole group. Tell listeners to pay close attention to supporting facts, details, and techniques that made each hoax convincing or unconvincing, and to the presentation skills exhibited by each group. Provide time for a brief discussion after each presentation. After all groups have presented their hoaxes, have the whole class vote on the most convincing hoax. Have students explain what made the winning group's hoax seem convincing
Wrap Up	5 minutes	Wrap up the lesson by asking students what they have learned in the lesson that they can apply when reading, watching, and listening to the news. What text features and techniques can they draw on to accurately assess the credibility and validity of sources of information?

- Bold text in the Instructional Sequence highlights explicit instruction to the Common Core standards.